

The facts are clear. Governor Bush's policy paper states that, "Each health insurer, including HCFA-sponsored plans that wish to participate . . . will have to offer an "expanded" benefit package, including out-patient prescription drugs . . . This will give seniors the opportunity to select the plan that best fits their health needs."

In other words, to get prescription drug coverage under the Bush plan, you have to get it through a private insurance plan. How high will the co-payments be? How high will the premiums be? How high will the deductible be? Governor Bush has no answer. Those important points are all left up to the private insurance companies.

Governor Bush says senior citizens will have the opportunity to select the plan that best meets their health needs. But what they will really have is the opportunity to select whatever plan private insurers choose to offer. If it costs too much, senior citizens are out of luck. If it doesn't cover the drugs their doctor prescribes, they're out of luck. The Bush plan is an insurance industry's dream, and a senior citizen's nightmare.

Governor Bush believes that private insurance companies and HMOs are the best way to provide prescription drug coverage to seniors. I don't question his sincerity. But I do question his unwillingness to defend his position in an open debate in front of the American people. When Vice-President GORE points out the facts, it isn't enough to evade the issue by calling the facts "fuzzy math" or a "scare tactic".

The ads that the Republican National Committee is running for the Bush campaign against the Gore plan reach new lows in disinformation. Under the Bush plan, senior citizens would have to get their prescription drugs through an HMO or private insurance company, but the GOP ads stand reality on its head by stating that under the Vice-President's proposal, senior citizens would have to obtain their coverage from a "government-run HMO."

In fact, under the Vice President's plan senior citizens would obtain their drug coverage through Medicare, in essentially the same way they obtain physician and hospital coverage today. The Gore plan specifically guarantees that it will cover any drug that a senior citizen's doctor prescribes. That's not true under the Bush plan—and it is a glaring omission.

Another issue in the debate over prescription drug coverage has not received sufficient attention—the linkage in Governor Bush's proposal between prescription drug coverage and other cutbacks in Medicare. When the American people and senior citizens understand what Governor Bush is proposing, they will reject it resoundingly.

Governor Bush has been very clear. His drug benefit won't be available to senior citizens unless they are willing

to accept severe changes in Medicare's coverage of their doctor's bills and hospital bills. He reiterated that point in the second debate. He said, "I think step one to make sure prescription drugs are more affordable for seniors . . . is to reform the Medicare system." Prescription drug coverage that senior citizens need should not be held hostage to changes in Medicare that senior citizens don't want—and it won't be held hostage under AL GORE's plan.

Governor Bush thinks that Medicare is obsolete and should be sent to the scrap heap. He favors a new model—in which senior citizens have to join HMOs or other private insurance plans or pay exorbitant premiums. But Medicare is still far and away one of the most successful social programs ever enacted. Senior citizens don't think that Medicare is ready for the scrap heap. They don't want to have to give up their family doctor and join an HMO in order to obtain coverage. But under the Bush plan, the price of staying in current Medicare and keeping your own doctor could be a premium increase of as much as 47 percent in the very first year, according to the Medicare actuary. For the vast majority of senior citizens, this heavy financial pressure could force them to give up their current Medicare coverage and their own doctor, and join an HMO.

Under the leadership of the Clinton-Gore administration, Medicare has gone from a condition of imminent bankruptcy to one in which Medicare will be solvent for the next quarter century—the longest period of projected Medicare solvency in the program's entire history. The independent Medicare Commission recently considered a proposal similar to the Bush plan, and the Commission said it could cause Medicare to become insolvent as early as 2005—just five years from now. If so, Congress would be faced with the stark choice of raising taxes, cutting benefits, or raising premiums. That's the Bush plan—and it's not a plan to protect senior citizens. It's a plan to privatize Medicare, and turn it over to the tender mercy of HMOs and the private insurance industry.

On prescription drugs and every other aspect of Medicare, the choice between the two presidential candidates is very clear—and it is clear on every other aspect of health care. The Bush record in Texas is one of indifference and ineptitude—of putting powerful interests ahead of ordinary families.

The Bush record in the campaign is one of consistent deception and distortion. The Bush proposals are at best inadequate and at worst harmful. Tax cuts for the wealthy are not as important as health care for children and prescription drugs for seniors. The American people understand that—but Governor Bush does not.

AL GORE has a career-long record of fighting for good health care for fami-

lies, for children, and for senior citizens. The current administration has a solid record of bipartisan accomplishment, ranging from protecting the solvency of Medicare to improving health insurance coverage through enactment of the Kassebaum-Kennedy bill and the Child Health Insurance Program. AL GORE's program responds to the real needs of the American people with real resources and a detailed action plan.

I am hopeful that every American will examine the records of the two candidates carefully. On health care, there should be no question as to which candidate stands with powerful special interests and which candidate stands with the American people. The choice is clear. Governor Bush stands with the powerful, and AL GORE stands with the people.

ORDER OF PROCEDURE

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, will the Senator yield? The Senator's words have kind of strayed a little bit from the Older Americans Act. Perhaps I could put in a unanimous consent request so that the Senator from Massachusetts is aware and so that we perhaps can do something else.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry. It is my understanding the Senator from Massachusetts is speaking under a unanimous consent agreement. He can speak for as long he wants.

Mr. JEFFORDS. On the Older Americans Act, I believe.

Mr. REID. No. There is no subject.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time is under the control of Senator JEFFORDS.

Mr. REID. I thought that under the unanimous consent agreement he could speak for as long as he needs.

Mr. KENNEDY. Parliamentary inquiry? I believe when I started to speak there was still time.

Mr. JEFFORDS. I am just asking what happens at the end. I would like to put a unanimous consent request in to make sure that we have time available before we vote.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I yield for that purpose, if he wants to make that request at this time with the understanding that I be recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. If the Senator from Vermont would state his unanimous consent request?

Mr. JEFFORDS. Following the remarks of Senator KENNEDY, I ask unanimous consent all time be yielded back on the bill and that there be 30 minutes equally divided for closing remarks prior to the vote on the bill with Senator GREGG to be recognized for the last 15 minutes.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, I understand that at 4:30 we would go to general debate on this bill with Senator GREGG getting the last 15 minutes.

Mr. JEFFORDS. That is correct.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. KENNEDY. Reserving the right to object, as I understand it, if this is not objected to, then we are in a period of morning business without a time limitation.

Mr. REID. The Senator from Massachusetts, I say to the Presiding Officer, has no time constraint on his speaking now.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the 24½ minutes that are now remaining in opposition to the Gregg amendment, time has been yielded for as much as he may consume to the Senator from Massachusetts after which the previous unanimous consent agreement will take effect.

The Senator may complete his statement.

Mr. KENNEDY. That is the order as stated by the Senator from Vermont. Am I correct?

Mr. JEFFORDS. Mr. President, I further ask unanimous consent that the Senate enter into a period of morning business until the hour of 3 p.m. with the time equally divided in the usual form.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, does the Senator from Vermont have any idea what we will do at 3 o'clock?

Mr. JEFFORDS. I have no idea.

Mr. REID. My point is, I say to my friend from Vermont, that until we have something more to do on the floor—we have had a number of requests on this side and probably on your side for people to speak in morning business—we will wait until 3 p.m. If there is no other business, we will go into morning business at 3 o'clock.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, reserving the right to object, would it be appropriate to inquire now if I could be placed on the list to speak as if in morning business for approximately 10 minutes?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. When does the Senator wish to speak?

Ms. LANDRIEU. Following Senator KENNEDY's time, which I understand would be about 20 more minutes, and then we go into morning business. I understand Senator ALLARD also wants to speak. I would be happy to follow Senator ALLARD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection? Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Massachusetts.

EDUCATION

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I want to just take a few minutes to review the education record. I think I have tried to outline in as an objective way as possible what the record is with regard to health, particularly with re-

gard to children in the State of Texas, the Governor's record on the Patients' Bill of Rights, on the CHIP program, and also on the Medicaid program.

I think one can't review that record—not only my statements or the statements in the most recent Time Magazine which have drawn effectively the exact same conclusion—and not reach the conclusion that children have not been a priority on the political agenda of Texas over the period of the last six years.

On the issue of education, I spoke briefly yesterday in the Senate. I am troubled, as many of our colleagues, that we are not having cloture on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In spite of all of the assurances that were given by the majority leader and Republican leadership, we still failed to do it.

I commend again our colleagues, Senator DEWINE, Senator JEFFORDS, Senator MIKULSKI, and others for effectively concluding the Older Americans Act shows even in these final hours that bipartisanship can work in a very important area. I welcome the chance to work with our colleagues on the committee and the chairman to make sure that we are going to take action. That is an enormously important piece of legislation for our seniors.

Education is enormously important for families as well. In spite of the fact that assurances were given by the majority, we still have not done so. For the first time in 35 years, we have not completed our work and reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

What has to be a central distress to all families is it appears now that the appropriations that are going to fund the Elementary and Secondary Education Act will be the last train out of the station.

They are more than 3½ weeks late after the end of the fiscal year. It is troublesome to me to hear all of the statements about the importance of prioritizing education when we see that we have basically failed to do our work here in the Senate on this issue.

I want to take a moment to find out what we might look to in terms of the future, again looking to what has happened in Texas over the period of these last several years.

On the issue of the record on education in Texas, it is more of an "education mirage" than an "education miracle."

Under Governor Bush, in 1998, according to the National Center for Educational Statistics, Texas ranked 45th in the nation in high school completion rates. Seventy-one percent of high school dropouts in Texas are minorities. Hispanic students in Texas dropped out at more than twice the rate of white students in the State.

In August, the College Board reported nationally that from 1997 to

2000, SAT scores have increased. But in Texas they have decreased. In 1997, Texas was 21 points below the SAT national average, and by 2000 the gap had widened to 26 points.

Let me review that very quickly. Since we have had a lot of talk and we have had a lot of sound bites on education, let's look at what has happened.

We will come back to what happened under the last several years in these same areas at the national level, which the Vice President was involved in and which he would like to see continued and expanded.

On Tuesday, Governor Bush heard more bad news. The Rand Corporation released a study that raises serious questions about the validity of the gains in student achievement claimed by the Governor. On CNN in August, the Governor said: Our state . . . has done the best . . . not measured by us but measured by the Rand Corporation . . . who take an objective look as to how states are doing when it comes to educating children.

Clearly, at that time, George W. Bush trusted the conclusions by Rand.

On CNN, in September, Governor Bush said: One of my proudest accomplishments is I worked with Republicans and Democrats to close the achievement gap in Texas.

The recent Rand study shows his claim is false. The achievement gap in Texas is not closing; it is widening.

On Fox News, in August, Governor Bush said: Without comprehensive regular testing, without knowing if children are really learning, accountability is a myth, and standards are just slogans.

But, the Rand study shows that the tests cited by Governor Bush to support his claim are biased. They found the gains in student achievement are the product of a discredited practice called "teaching to the test," and that claims of real success in student achievement far exceed the actual results in Texas.

The Rand study also says the gains in student achievement in Texas may be inflated, questioning the validity of the scores. According to the study, gains on the Texas State test are far greater than the results for the same students on standard national tests.

The Rand study questions the value of the Texas State test because it involves teaching to the test instead of real learning. The Bush education plan has the same serious flaw. It focuses on tests, tests, and more tests. We, as a country, have more tests than any other country in the world.

Inevitably, schools will focus more and more on test preparation, as happened in Texas with the State tests, and less on real teaching. In the end, it is education that suffers and so do the students.

In addition, in Texas more and more students with disabilities are excluded